

and disease-related disasters have demonstrated weaknesses in the risk protection available through crop insurance.

During the debate on the 1996 farm bill, I encouraged Congress to maintain a sufficient farm safety net, and since its enactment my Administration has repeated that call, proposing measures to buttress the safety net that are consistent with the market-oriented policy of the 1996 farm bill. The 1994 Crop Insurance Reform Act established a policy of improving the crop insurance program in order to remove the need for ad hoc disaster payments. This commitment to crop insurance as the preferred means of managing crop loss risks was reaffirmed in the 1996 farm bill. Farmers have responded to this policy by maintaining their enrollment in crop insurance at very high levels, especially in the Northern Plains states.

Therefore, I am instructing the Secretary of Agriculture to redouble his efforts to augment the current crop insurance program to more adequately meet farmers' needs to protect against farm income losses. In the interim, to respond to the current unusual situations, I urge the Congress to take emergency action to address specific stresses now afflicting sectors of the farm economy.

I agree with the intent of Senator Conrad's amendment and recommend that funding to address these problems be designated as emergency spending. A supplemental crop insurance program for farmers who experience repeated crop losses, a compensation program for farmers and ranchers whose productive land continues to be under water, and extended authority for the livestock disaster program are examples of the type of emergency actions that could help farmers and ranchers.

It is also crucial that the Congress provide the level of funding proposed in my FY 1999 budget in the regular appropriations bills and that the Congress pass the full IMF package to support the efforts of American farmers.

I am confident that you and your colleagues share my concern for American farmers and ranchers who are experiencing financial stress from natural disasters and low prices, exacerbated by the global downturn

in agricultural trade, and I encourage the Congress to take emergency action quickly. Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader, and Richard A. Gephardt, minority leader, House of Representatives. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks at an Empowerment Zone Reception

July 15, 1998

Thank you so much. Welcome to the White House. Thank you for the good work you've been doing. I want to thank all the people who are responsible for this reception. I thank my Cabinet members and the Members of Congress for coming. I welcome all of you here, including the many, many elected officials, and especially Mayor Corradini. We wish her well as she assumes the helm of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

I'd like to thank the Marine Band for playing for you. They just celebrated their 200th birthday last weekend. As far as I know, there are no members of the original band still playing—[laughter]—but they have a magnificent sense of tradition.

I am so happy to have you here, to look out and see all of you, because you are the living embodiment of the political philosophy I have sought to bring alive in this country. You are the living embodiment of how I believe Washington, DC, should work: putting progress and people over partisanship, community over division, tomorrow's hopes over yesterday's fears.

I cannot thank the Vice President enough for shepherding this community empowerment process these last several years from what was just a gleam in our eyes over one of our weekly lunches to this vast array of Americans. And if you look around this crowd, if this isn't one America for the 21st century, I don't know what is. I thank you.

I want you to take away from here, in addition to all the practical things you've learned and the sense of enthusiasm and positive outlook you have, a couple of very brief points. So I want to repeat briefly some of the things

the Vice President said, because we still need your help.

You know, when we came here, we had a philosophy of Government that we thought was appropriate to the 1990's and beyond. We wanted to get beyond what I thought was a completely sterile debate in Washington about whether Government could solve all the problems or Government was the source of all the problems. We thought our job was to empower people, to be a catalyst, to be a partner, to give people the tools to solve their own problems and make the most of their own lives and build strong personal lives, strong families, strong neighborhoods, strong communities. You have been the instrument of that, and many of you were just doing that anyway. We have tried to be good partners to you, and you have certainly been all we could ever have asked for.

If anybody had told me in 1993 when I took the oath of office as President and began to implement the ideas that we ran on, that in less than 6 years we'd have over 16 million jobs, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest percentage of our people on welfare at 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation rate in 32 years, the highest homeownership in history, millions of people taking advantage of the family leave law, getting pensions they couldn't get before, 5 million more kids getting health insurance, the highest immunization rates of children in our history, opening the doors of college to all Americans through the HOPE scholarship—and we do all that with the smallest Federal Government in 35 years—I would say, I'll take that, and be grateful for America.

But I have been urging the American people and urging this Congress to use these good times, not simply to enjoy them but to see them as the solemn responsibility to our children and grandchildren to take on the larger challenges that we face moving into the 21st century. And you know what they are as well as I do. You know we still have a lot of work to do to make the world a place of peace and freedom and prosperity. That's why I went to China to do my best to make a constructive partnership with the people of the world's most populous nation.

You know we still have work to do to give this country the world's best system of elementary and secondary education. We've got the best college system in the world, but everybody knows we can't stop until our children, from the first day of school, know that their schools are the best in the world.

You know we've still got work to do to prove that we can deal with these enormous environmental challenges we have—from brownfields in the cities to still work we need to do with clean water to saving our oceans to dealing with the challenge of climate change. And I take it, after having the 5 hottest years in the last 600 years in the 1990's, no one seriously quarrels with the idea that the Vice President was right years ago when he told us that global warming was real, and we have to find a way to grow the economy and preserve our environment.

And in spite of this great, wonderful crowd, we still have work to do to prove that we can all live together, across the lines of race and religion and other differences that divide us, because what we share in common is more important. That's what you live. You live that philosophy every day in your communities, and we need our political leaders to be as good as you are. And if America is going to lead the world to a better place, America has to always be striving to be better, to really, truly be one America where everybody has a chance and everybody has a role to play.

We have to save Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century so that when the baby boomers like me retire we've got a decent retirement, but we don't bankrupt our children and our grandchildren. No person in the baby boom generation I have ever talked to—without regard to their income, their race, or what they did for a living—did not want desperately to make the changes now that have to be made so that when we retire we do not impose an unconscionable burden on the future generations. We have to work on that. And we can do it if we do it together in a fair and decent and honorable way.

And I would say the last big challenge we face is the one that you're here working on. Yes, we have the best economy in a generation, maybe the best economy we have ever

had. But there's still a lot of farming communities that don't know it. I got a letter from a farmer in North Dakota today who said that Arkansas is not the only town with a place called Hope. But there's not much of it left in Hope, North Dakota, because of the problems they face. And I saw the pictures of his little town, and it looked like so many towns in my home State back in the eighties.

There are a lot of Native American tribes represented here, and a lot of them still don't have the jobs they need, the education they need, the support they need. There are a lot of urban neighborhoods represented here, where the unemployment rate is still too high; the crime rate is still too high; and the children still don't have enough hope for the future.

And so I say to you, we want to be good partners. But to do it you have to help us convince the Congress to put progress and people over partisanship. We need another round of empowerment zones in this 1999 budget.

Secretary Cuomo has got a budget that would provide for another 180,000 units of affordable housing, 50,000 housing vouchers for people moving from welfare to work, hundreds of millions of dollars for economic development in our most distressed communities. We have an education empowerment zones initiative that deserves to pass so that we'll have more places like Chicago, which now has the sixth biggest school district in the country in summer school, which now is feeding tens of thousands of kids three square meals a day. We need to pass our initiative to help more communities provide after-school programs for kids to keep them out of trouble and to keep them learning. We have a lot to do.

We still have brownfields to clean up. We still have toxic waste dumps to clean up. We still have work to do. We want to expand the Community Development Financial Institution so we can make more of those microcredit loans. We made 2 million of those microcredit loans with American tax dollars in Africa and Latin America and Asia last year. If they work there, 2 million loans like that could revolutionize inner-city America, could revolutionize the Native American communities, could revolutionize a lot of

small, rural communities in this country. We can do it, and we need your help to do it.

So I say to you, we need these things. And finally, all of you deserve a full and fair count of the American people in the 2000 census so you're not shortchanged just because you don't have the political power that money brings. You represent people in this country, and you're entitled to your fair share of our future. When you think about how far we've come and you know how far you could take your communities, when you think about how desperately America needs every child, every mind, every able-bodied adult at work, every person with a new idea with a chance to start a business—if you really believe in the American community, it must mean that every American should be part of a strong and growing and thriving and united community.

So I say to you, I'm happy you're here. I'm proud of your success. I am so grateful that I had a chance to be President during these last 6 years. But we need to bear down and do more so that when we are all done we can look back and say, we built our bridge; we prepared our country; we went into the 21st century with everybody making the trip.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:27 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Deedee Corradini of Salt Lake City, UT.

Remarks on Proposed Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

July 16, 1998

Thank you very much, all of you, for your obvious passion and concern for this issue. I thank Senator Daschle and Congressman Gephardt. I thank Congressman Ganske for his very moving and highly illustrative argument. I don't think any of you will ever forget it. I thank Barbara Blakeney and Dr. Smoak for their strong representation of health care providers throughout our country. I thank all the health care advocates who are here today, all the Members of Congress, especially I